

## From Warrior Queen to the Fairest of the Fair: Imaginations of Malaysian Women in Tourist Brochures

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**Abstract:** The aim of this paper is to analyse the portrayal of women in the Malaysian promotional brochures. The assessment focuses on how Malaysian women have been imagined in tourism brochures promoting two states, Sabah and Kelantan. The brochures promoting these two states published from 1969 to 2014 were examined using content analysis method. Among the key findings of this paper include the portrayal of the Kadazan Dusun women in Sabah as attractive and intimately connected to a local beauty pageant and the Malay women in Kelantan as brave, graceful and closely linked to a legendary warrior and traditional performing arts. Other depictions include women involvement in traditional music, dances, handicrafts, spiritual rites and as sellers in the local markets. From a holistic perspective, it is identified that women from different ethnic groups in Malaysia have been presented in tourism brochures over the years so as to promote ethnic and cultural tourism as their unique attributes can accentuate ethnic identities. In fact, the depiction of multi ethnic women has been exploited since the earliest brochure publication prior to the launched of the promotional campaign “Malaysia Truly Asia” which focuses on multiculturalism as its primary attraction.

**Keywords:** Women; Representation; Tourism Promotion; Orientalism; Multiculturalism; Content Analysis

### 1. Introduction

Among prominent images included in promotional materials to attract tourists to various destinations around the world are the portrayals of men and women. It is claimed that the commoditisation of women in tourism marketing is not only limited to promotional materials published by tour operators but they are widely employed in national and local brochures as well (Badger, 2000). It is reflected in a number of studies (e.g. Tavares, 2011; Ghodsee, 2001; Sirakaya & Sonmez, 2000) that images of women are often featured in tourism promotion because it is believed that they can play important roles to potential visitors since they signify particular projections and convey specific messages. For example, Ringer (2007) argues that images of women are commonly employed as part of the cultural and natural environment as they can embody the land and maternal care. The prospect of receiving care and protection can be a pull factor for potential tourists as they can expect to experience home away from home. As such, attractive and exotic women have often been selected to be featured in tourism promotional brochures (Badger, 2000). Additionally, destination marketers have incorporated female figures, especially images of different ethnic groups, in promotional tourism materials in order to signify themes of exoticism, love and leisure (Ghodsee, 2001).

Based on the literature review, it is demonstrated that Malaysian women have played significant roles in numerous aspects of life particularly in economy and politics. For example, Musa (2005) claims that it has been acknowledged by external sources such as China and Portuguese of the presence of Malay women as sellers and traders prior to the arrivals of the colonial powers. In fact, it is said that a Malay woman named ‘Cik Siti Wan Kembang’ had been the ruler of one of the East Coast states in Malaysia,

that is Kelantan during the 17 century (Wan Ismail, 2002). In the context of tourism marketing, women have also been represented and included in the Malaysian tourism promotion over the years particularly as part of the 'Malaysia Truly Asia' campaign. As this campaign focuses on the portrayal of Malaysia as a multi-ethnic destination, people of different ethnic groups, including women, have been used. Portrayal of women is clearly apparent in the promotion of Malaysia through images of five girls to represent multi-ethnic societies of Malaysia as part of "Truly Asia" campaign (Popescu & Corbos, 2011). These girls represent the main ethnic groups living in Malaysia: Malay, Chinese and Indian. The largest ethnic groups in the states of Sabah and Sarawak are also depicted through girls wearing Dayak and Kadazan traditional attires. Besides the images of these girls, it is identified that Malaysian women have been utilised widely in tourism promotion for a long time and they can play significant roles to portray the image and identity of Malaysia as a destination. Nevertheless, there are limited studies which have been investigated regarding the representation of Malaysian women particularly in the context of tourism promotion. To fill this gap, this paper explores how Malaysian women have been depicted in tourism promotional brochures published by the national tourism authorities of Malaysia over the years.

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1 *Oriental women and representation*

In the East, gender portrayals have been examined widely, particularly the negative representation of women. In his book *Orientalism*, Said (1978) claimed that Oriental women had been presented in a degrading manner in many travel writings and novels, frequently showing them as the object of male fantasy, especially by the Orientalists. Women have been portrayed in the media based on their customary responsibilities as obedient housewives rather than as working or career women in the past (Dumato & Posusney, 2003; cited in Al Jenaibi, 2011). During the colonial era, Oriental women have been represented either as object of male gaze such as harem or oppressed in their societies (Zine, 2000). Similarly, the projections of Oriental women in the present days are very much shaped by the Western traditional perspective, whereby they are commonly depicted as inferior, passive and obedient (Hasan, 2005). Despite these negative portrayals, women also represent an important component in forming a country's image and identity (Subhimaros, 2006). For example, the significance of Thai women are reflected through the connotation of them as the 'flower of the nation' and their utilisation in the public personification in an effort to convey a developed image of Thailand internationally (Subhimaros, 2006).

In the beginning, the traditional Malay societies only see women as the ones who brighten their homes and looked after their families (Saat & Zainun, 2011). Devasahayam (2005) states that tradition or *adat* plays important roles in influencing the life of traditional Malay women whose roles and responsibilities are specified such as managing private areas as compared to men who are in charge of outdoor works and activities. Historically, the representation of Tun Kudu in the Malay Annals or 'Sejarah Melayu', can reflect negative images of Malay women despite her vital role in solving the problem in the court of Melaka (Hashim, 2000). Although Tun Kudu was the daughter of the Chief Minister (Seri Wak Raja) and was married to Sultan Muzzafar and divorced and then remarried to another Chief Minister Seri Nara Diraja Tun Ali, she was downgraded as pawn and remained in the background and was voiceless when decisions affecting her life were made (Hashim, 2000). However, it is reflected in Musa's (2005) work that from a Malaysian perspective, the importance of women is not mostly judged by competing with or being the same as men, but in their roles in political marriage and in exercising influence in the decision making of their husbands, particularly among royal and elite women. This view is different from the analysis of Western scholars who often compared women's achievement with men. Based on Musa's point, it can be extrapolated that Malay women can still be important but in a more subtle way.

## 2.2 *Women and tourism representation*

It is identified that women have been an important part of destination marketing and their images have been utilised in tourism promotion in order to convey selected themes or project symbolic meanings. For example, Badger (2000) asserts that not only unique and good looking women have been featured in destination marketing, but also their representations are commonly employed to promote cultural heritage and multi ethnic attractions. One of the earliest studies which explored representation of women was carried out by Goffmann in 1979. As part of a gender study, Goffmann (1979) revealed that as compared to men, women were commonly represented in submissive and passive ways in the US advertisements. Findings of Goffmann's (1979) study reveal several similarities with occurrences of tourism brochures (Morgan & Pritchard, 1998). In fact, in the context of representation of women, it is acknowledged that both tourism brochures and advertisements function similarly (Morgan & Pritchard, 1998). In the area of tourism marketing, Sirakaya & Sonmez (2000) concluded that although, through time, the feminist movement had transformed the role of American women, they were still depicted according to the traditional stereotypes in US vacation brochures in order to match the fantasy created by tourism. A study by Bowen (2002) uncovered that stereotypes associated with the traditional roles of men and women are still commonly held and reinforced in the context of America. Based on the analysis of travel leisure magazine from 1969 to 1999, it is revealed that female tourists were mostly featured on the beaches wearing swimsuit while male tourists were often represented either participating in outdoor recreation or sporting activities (Bowen, 2002). This study also found that although many American women still have to take care of their domestic duties at home, local males have been portrayed in the magazines to carry out the jobs as servers. Findings of these two studies demonstrate that in the context of a developed nation like America, the traditional role associated with women still persists to a certain extent in tourism related promotional materials. However, there are some changes in the representation of traditional roles of women identified as well.

As reflected through several studies (e.g. Banyopadhyay & Nascimento, 2010; Young-Hoon, 2003; Bandyopadhyay, 2009), images of non-Western destinations perpetuated in tourism marketing including women, are commonly embedded in the colonial discourse of Orientalism. As an example, as part of the representation of Jamaica and the Caribbean as tourist destinations to Western market, Wilkes (2013) claims that white women and their femininity have been used in tourism promotion especially white weddings as they can symbolise high taste, pleasure and pampering. In contrast, the portrayal of non-Western women is quite different. Images linked to these women are not so positive and the characteristics commonly represented by their past colonials are still widely used in their tourism promotion. For example, in the context of Brazil, it is stated that the colonial historical fantasies of Brazilian women as sensuous continue to be presented in contemporary promotional materials (Banyopadhyay and Nascimento, 2010).

Based on the review of literature (e.g. Banyopadhyay, 2009; Young-Hoon, 2003; Yan and Santos, 2009), a number of attributes often utilised in the portrayal of Oriental women in tourism promotion can be identified. Among features apparent through the representation of Oriental women include exoticism, femininity and sensuality. The portrayal of Indian women as exotic is clearly evident in the nineteenth century Western travel writing and contemporary Western travel marketing as well (Bandyopadhyay, 2009). The portrayal of exoticism is also evident through female traditional costumes and decorations. For instance, as part of tourism promotional video "China, Forever", visuals of traditional Chinese women wearing *qipao*, a dress made from silk which hugs the body and emphasises their femininity have been incorporated (Yan & Santos, 2009). Similarly, in the context of India, images of exoticism and femininity are manifested through visuals and descriptions of traditional costumes such as veiled, *sarees* and *odhnis*, including traditional dance performances. These themes are further accentuated via the descriptions of Indian women as feminine in their love for wearing jewelry such as nose rings, ear rings, forehead

ornament, bangles, necklace and having ethnic body art (mehndi) (Bandyopadhyay, 2009). Attributions depicting exoticism, femininity and sensuality are also detected through the analysis of representation of Korean women in tourism posters. These themes are spotted through images of traditional brides, fan dancers, traditional musicians, and married women taking baths and carrying water (Young-Hoon, 2003). However, there are also images of modern women incorporated into tourism promotion of Oriental countries. To illustrate, visuals of modern women are incorporated in tourism promotion of “China, Forever”. The projections of modern women are manifested through Chinese women wearing modern clothes and enjoying their lives independently and freely like Western women. The review of literature demonstrates that the representation of women in tourism promotional materials include the portrayal of attributes commonly associated with Orientalists’ discourse of Oriental countries. Nevertheless, elements to depict modernisation are evident in the representation of women for Oriental destinations.

### **3. *Method and data collection***

The analysis of the brochures for this paper was done using content analysis. It was chosen due to the nature of this paper involving the evaluation of the content of one category of promotional material. As claimed by Echtner (2002), it is a systematic technique often utilised to analyse many different kinds of printed contents. According to Graneheim & Lundman (2004), this method has been adopted to explore quantitative and qualitative components. One main component of content analysis method discussed by scholars in the field is the layers of content which can be studied by this analysis tool. Despite the earlier theoretical understanding of this method particularly by Berelson (1952) which focused on the visible aspect, the underlying meaning later form as another key feature of content analysis. According to Graneheim & Lundman (2004) over the years, content analysis has been expanded to include the latent component of text messages. On a technical aspect, these scholars demonstrate that both manifest and latent components of messages can be investigated through content analysis method. This allows for a more comprehensive understanding of communication content as subjective meaning that can also be explored using this method. In the context of this paper, content analysis is adopted in the analysis of one of the well-known promotional tools: tourism brochures.

In this paper, tourism brochures were examined in the assessment of women representation in tourism promotion. Tourism brochures were selected as they are commonly used as a standard communication by destination marketers throughout the globe (Getz & Sailor, 1993). In fact, the analysis of tourism brochures can reveal comprehensive understanding of the representation of women in destination marketing as the Malaysian national tourism authorities have been using brochures to promote Malaysia since the early development of tourism in the 1960s to the present days. The material assessed in this paper includes brochures published by the Malaysian national promotional bodies which were used to sell Sabah and Kelantan. These two states have been selected as a preliminary analysis of brochures, uncovered that female images represented in their brochures were quite significant. In fact, women from these two states are generally considered throughout Malaysia to be more attractive. In the context of Kelantan, this state has a close tie to women as it is often referred to as the state of “Cik Siti Wan Kembang”. This is actually the name of a famous queen who is said to have ruled Kelantan in the past. In the analysis carried out in this paper, brochures both in Malay and English published from 1969 to 2014 were examined. State brochures, city brochures and regional brochures describing these states were analysed. These decisions were made based on the availability of tourism brochures published over the years and it was found that the strategies adopted in promoting Malaysia and these states over the years vary. Visual and textual descriptions related to women projected in the brochures to depict Sabah and Kelantan were evaluated in this paper. Earlier publications were from the collection archived at the Tourism Malaysia Resource Centre in Kuala Lumpur, while relatively recent brochures were collected from Tourism Malaysia offices.

#### 4. Findings

In the analysis of the representation of women in tourism promotion, a total of 29 brochures (16 Kelantan and 13 Sabah) have been examined. Overall, findings of this paper demonstrate that visual and textual descriptions related to women have been employed in the promotion of Kelantan and Sabah from 1969 to 2014 either directly or indirectly. In general, people including women, represent important parts of ethnic and cultural attractions in both states.

##### 4.1 Sabah

In the assessment of tourism brochures selling Sabah, several brochures from 1969 have featured women on their front covers through time. For example, a brochure published in 1972 featured two local women in tribal costume, while visuals of a tribal woman appeared on the front page of brochures published from 2001 to 2003. On these front covers, images of women wearing traditional and tribal costumes have been presented. One of the prominent images of Sabahan women are associated with Kadazan Dusun women whose beauty pageant is known as the “fairest of the fair.” To support these images, beautiful Kadazan Dusun women wearing their iconic traditional black costumes have been utilised in the brochures. For instance, a visual of three young Kadazan Dusun women wearing their tribal attire walking in a village is included in the brochure published in 1972 and the visual of three young Kadazan Dusun parading in a local event appeared in the brochure published in 1969. Textual descriptions related to Kadazan Dusun women are also presented in tourism brochures. Interestingly, there are statements included in the brochures which manifested clearly to readers that Kadazan women are attractive and recommendations of their locations are made available for potential tourists to find them. As an example, part of the description of the “fairest of the fair”, readers or visitors to Sabah are suggested to look for the Kadazan girls in the villages of Penampang and Papar. It is further explained in the brochure that:

“Long before the High priests and Priestesses of Fashion in Paris, London and New York declared shiny disc dresses and detachable circular chain belts, the revolutionary T0-DAY look, the Kadazan girls have paraded the cat-walk by the silhouette of the magnificent Mt. Kinabalu in such attire. The gold coins, forming a gleaming chain, adorn their tiny waists, gathering loosely the black long-sleeved shift accentuating the youthful figures of the agriculturalist Kadazans. The caftan-like collars are further stitched with rows and rows of smaller coins, presenting an elegant contrast against the black. Their hats can rival any at Ascot. Finely woven and delicately designed the circular bottom edge taper at the top where fresh flowers are arranged ikebana style. Papar is especially famous for the beauty of its Kadazan girls.” (Brochure Kota Kinabalu – Eastern Gateway to Malaysia, 1969).

Almost similar statements relating to Kadazan women and their traditional costumes have been incorporated again in tourism brochure published in 1972. These quotes demonstrate the imaginations of Kadazan women as attractive and how their tribal costumes can further accentuate their beauty. In fact, the black tribal costume has been compared to costumes in fashion shows in famous cities around the world like Paris, London and New York. It is reflected in these quotes that women do represent one of the main tourism attractions in Sabah. Furthermore, Sabahan women have been transformed to be a commodity and are projected as objects of tourist’s gaze.

Although the sub section and descriptions linked to the fairest of the fair have been omitted from tourism brochures published relatively recently, pictures of Kadazan Dusun females wearing the iconic black tribal costumes are still featured as part of the promotion of the Monsopiad Cultural Village. For example, there is a visual of two women performing a traditional dance in brochures published from 2009 to 2014. In addition, a photograph of Kadazan Dusun women performing Sumazau dance is included in the state

brochure published in 1996. In relation to music and performing arts, one state's brochure published in 1976 also presented an image a Rungus woman playing a traditional instrument.

Images and textual descriptions of Sabahan women as sellers in the local markets called 'tamu' are widely included in the brochures published earlier. As part of the description of 'tamu' or market, visuals of women as vendors have been used in the brochures published from 1972 to 1976. For instance, an image of Kadazan woman carrying a large bamboo load on her back is incorporated into a brochure published in 1976 and visuals of women squatting and selling various items including bamboo baskets are available in the brochures too. It is demonstrated that 'tamu' has been one of the main attractions from 1969 to 1976. In terms of text, it is stated in a brochure that "the 'tamu' are great attractions. In the light of the misty dawn villagers can be seen arriving for the 'tamu'. Most men rise of the backs of their ponies or their buffalos. The womenfolk balance large, over-loaded 'bongun' or carry baskets on their back and often walk along... Vendors are nearly all women who squat under a make-shift roof or the shade of oiled paper umbrellas" (Brochure Sabah, 1976). Besides, the projection of Sabah as a multiculturalism destination where various ethnics in this state live in harmony is evident in the assessment of the representation of women. It is mentioned in a brochure that "Scenes of young Kadazan girls with their black short sarongs bound by cane ornaments setting up their vegetables stalls next to headcloth-draped betel-chewing Bajau women selling tobacco wrappers, make beautiful photographs. The spectacle of a congregation of people of several races and tongues making up Sabah's famous "tamu" has to be appreciated" (Brochure Kota Kinabalu – Eastern Gateway to Malaysia, 1972). These statements show that people from different ethnic groups in Sabah participated in 'tamu' as sellers and buyers and that there is no conflict between ethnic groups as depicted in the quote that Kadazan and Bajau women can sit next to each other.

From holistic perspective, images of women from different ethnic groups have been used to complement the projection of Sabah as a state which comprises people of different races. For example, an image of several women wearing traditional costumes including tribal necklace weaving, have been featured in brochures as part of the caption "The Carefree People You Meet". It is included in this subheading that the population of Sabah "comprises of 30 different races speaking over 80 local dialects. The beautiful thing is all these diverse ethnic groups live together harmoniously while at the same time preserving their own cultures, traditions, festivals and customs, to make Sabah a multiculturally exotic experience unlike any other" (Sabah, 2001; 2002; 2003). Statements related to women have also been incorporated into the brochures as part of general portrayal of Sabahan people. In the description of Kadazan Dusuns, it is mentioned in the brochure that "The largest ethnic group, the Kadazans/Dusuns, make up about a third of the population. These are the prosperous agricultural rice producers of Sabah, although in recent times, many have found success in modern professions. They are well-known for their unique customs that feature female priestesses called bobohizan presiding over still practiced ancient rituals" (Brochure Sabah 2001; 2002; 2003). It is added in these brochures that *bobohizan* plays a significant function during the celebration of Harvest Festival or 'Pesta Keamatan' where the female priestesses are often featured in the traditional dances to search for the rice spirits while they are in a state of trance. It is reflected in the quoted and additional statements that women play important roles in the realm of spiritual in Kadazan Dusun society in Sabah.

#### **4.2 Kelantan**

There are four main themes identified as part of the representation of Kelantanese women in tourism brochures published from 1972 to 2014. Firstly, images and textual descriptions showcasing women involvement in traditional dance dramas and performing arts namely *mak yong* and *menora* are visibly evident. Visual images of women wearing these traditional attires were featured on the front cover of state brochures published in 1972 and 1986. These images symbolise the cultural heritage attractions of which

can be found in Kelantan and to show potential visitors that Kelantanese people still embrace their heritage traditions. Kelantanese women represent a significant part of tourism attractions as they usually appear prominently on the front cover of brochures. These images are quite striking as the costumes they are wearing are unique and elaborate with headgears and decorated fingernails. Visuals of women in these costumes appeared not only on the front covers but also throughout the brochures. In terms of size, visuals of females included in the state brochures, are relatively large as well.

However, over time, visuals of female dancers have become less prominent in the sense that they are no longer featured on the front cover and are not included widely in the brochures. These findings may be a reflection of the change values by the Malays. In fact, during the 1990s and 2000s, Kelantan has come to be perceived as one of the most Islamic states in Malaysia, particularly politically. Therefore, visuals of women wearing traditional costumes associated with dance dramas and performing arts with non-Muslim mythology have been omitted as they are not politically and socially acceptable anymore for a state like Kelantan. In fact, it is identified that visuals of local women included in the brochures published in the 1990s and 2000s are featured with the majority of them wearing head scarfs.

Another prominent theme apparent in brochures promoting Kelantan is that Kelantanese females are renowned for their entrepreneurial skills. This attribute is clearly apparent in terms of visuals and textual descriptions as well. Visuals of a local market known as 'Pasar Siti Khadijah' or also known as the 'New Central Market' are widely incorporated into state brochures published from 1970s to 2000s. Images of women as sellers and buyers in the market have been included in almost all brochures promoting Kelantan. For example, it is described in brochures published in 1970s and 1980s that Kelantan is famous for its women, not only for their beauty, fair complexion and graceful characters, but also for their dedicated attitude, making them renowned as entrepreneurs as well. This finding may be a continuation of the claim made by Musa (2005) that historically, sellers and traders have been among the jobs commonly held by Malay women, a role which is still evident in the present days.

As part of the description of 'New central Market', it is explained that this market is "a riot of colour and is a popular spot for photography buffs. Kelantanese stall holders conduct their business amidst rows of chillies, carrots, seafood and farm produce. It may surprise you that a majority of them are women. Perhaps, this can be attributed to the fact that Kelantan was once ruled by a princess" (Brochure Kelantan, 1999). This quote demonstrates a connection between women entrepreneurial skills and Kelantanese legendary queen, Cik Siti Wan Kembang. For example, the quote relating to female entrepreneurs in Kelantan ended with statements that "Perhaps this is a throwback to the fact that Kelantan was once ruled by a princess, Cik Siti Wan Kembang. Kelantanese women remain fiercely entrepreneurial and have been known to be hard bargainers" (Brochure Kelantan, 1994). It is evident in these quotes that not only do women play important roles in the state's economy but also in the state's politic. In relation to this legendary queen, it is included in the description of a site known as Gunung Reng that "Kelantan is fondly known as 'The Land of Cik Siti Wan Kembang', for its association with this legendary warrior queen and her daughter, Puteri Saadong. Their legends can be traced to many other places in the state. Bukit Marak, about 20km from Kota Bharu, was said to be Puteri Saadong's dwelling place while Padang Halban is where her husband was laid to rest" (Brochure Kelantan, 2007). This quote demonstrates that Kelantanese women play important roles politically and economically ever since as in the context of Cik Siti Wan Kembang who became a ruler and a warrior as well.

However, over time, fewer specific details relating to women, including the uniqueness associated with a market named Siti Khadijah, in which the majority of traders are women, has been shortened to only one sentence. For example, it is stated in a brochure that "The majority of traders here are women and the profusion of colours, aromatic and sounds bear testimony to the variety of goods on sale" (Brochure Kelantan, 2004). In the relatively recent regional brochures published from 2009 to 2014 to promote

Kelantan, descriptions related to women as part of the market has been omitted from these brochures. Although visuals of the market are still featured in the brochures, they are not a close-up images, therefore the presence of women are not clear to readers.

Women and handicrafts are another key theme found evident in tourism brochures. Visuals and descriptions showing the involvement of Kelantanese women in making handicrafts particularly *batik* and *songket* are represented in a number of tourism brochures. As part of the description of songket weaving, it is mentioned in a brochure that “also, where previously songket-weaving was strictly a court vocation, it is now mostly the occupation of village women who find time to sit at the loom in between doing household chores” and in the description of bamboo weaving it is stated that “Today, bamboo-weaving is a major cottage industry and most of the weavers are village women. Far from being a simple craft, it requires deft fingerwork and much patience to weave the finely split bamboo strips” (Kelantan Map and Guide, 1986). Although there is no description to state the involvement of women in handicrafts, there are several visuals showing local women weaving songket, painting batik and performing other cottage industries depicted in the state brochures published in 1994, 2004 and 2007. Furthermore, as part of the promotion of homestays in Kelantan, there is a picture of a female tourist learning bamboo weaving from two local women. It shows both the female tourist and the women wearing traditional local attire commonly worn in a village (Brochure Kelantan, 2007). Lastly, it is identified that in the relatively recent brochures published from 2009 to 2014, visuals and descriptions related to women have been cut. There is just one visual showcasing two local women demonstrating bamboo weaving to a female tourist.

## 5. Discussions

In general, the findings of this paper support arguments made by previous scholars that images incorporated in tourism promotion have accentuated the stereotypes associated with the traditional roles of women, and for non-Western destinations, their tourism representation has included portrayals of women framed within Orientalists’ discourse. A similar observation was made by Young-Hoon (2003) who identified femininity as one of the main attractions incorporated in Asian tourist promotion. This is evident through descriptions of Sabahan and Kelantanese women as attractive and graceful in their unique traditional clothing. These projections are further supported via images of many young and beautiful women being included in tourism brochures. Visuals of young women wearing traditional costumes complete with headgears and decorated fingernails have also highlighted their femininity. However, the findings of this paper add to the understanding of tourism representation via the portrayal of women by revealing that despite the importance of femininity in attracting tourists, images depicting exotic traditional dancers and their descriptions can be minimised from promotional brochures if they are parallel with socially acceptable values and do not reinforce the current vision a particular state wants to convey. This shows that tourism representation is not immune from various pressures and they can be shaped by values and chosen agendas (Santos 1994; cited in Salazar, 2008). Moreover, images of strong and active women are incorporated in the promotion of Sabah and Kelantan through visuals and textual descriptions of legendary warrior queen, female sellers and vendors in local markets, female carrying heavy load on their back and priestesses.

Findings of the portrayal of Malaysian women in tourism brochures from 1969 to 2014 indicate that there are a number of factors which have influenced these findings. It is showed that marketing strategies adopted to market these two states over the years play a role in the way how Sabahan and Kelantanese women have been represented. In the early years of tourism development in Malaysia, people including women have formed an important part of tourism attraction. Although images and descriptions related to women still appeared in the brochures, over time, these descriptions and images have become less prominent in the brochures as less and less images and textual descriptions related to women are incorporated in the relatively recent brochures. This is partly due to the marketing strategies adopted by



Tourism Malaysia. In terms of promotion, the current brochures promoting tourism involved publishing brochures based on regional basis rather than on individual state in Malaysia. For example, Kelantan is included in the brochure entitled 'East Coast of Malaysia' together with Terengganu and Pahang, while Sabah is included in the brochure entitled 'East Malaysia'. Other than that, the analysis of the brochures over the years also reveals that the relatively recent brochures promoting both Sabah and Kelantan feature more images of visitors enjoying various natural and cultural attractions rather than images and descriptions of local hosts especially women.

The presence of multi ethnic women in tourism brochures is also connected to the political situation of the country as well as strategies used by the tourism authorities at particular periods of Malaysian tourism development. As a pluralistic country, it is therefore important for the tourism authorities to represent different ethnic in their tourism promotional efforts. Ethnicity is a delicate issue in Malaysia and the findings of this paper confirm that multi-ethnic women have to be incorporated into tourism brochures promoting Sabah. Besides, it is important to note that although the representation of multi-ethnic women can further accentuate the projection of Malaysia as a "Truly Asia" destination, their images and textual descriptions have been minimised in the relatively recent brochures. It is identified that the current brochures highlight more on nature rather than culture as its main attraction. In the context of Kelantan, although there are a couple images of women still presented in brochures, these visuals feature Muslim women donning Islamic attires. It is also identified that in the relatively recent brochures selling Kelantan, images of local women have been replaced by visuals of foreign tourists or tourist interacting with the locals. These modifications are probably due to the new promotional strategies adopted by Tourism Malaysia in promoting these states.

## 6. Conclusion

In conclusion, this paper has explored the representation of Malaysian women in tourism brochures promoting Sabah and Kelantan published from 1969 to 2014 using a content analysis method. Findings of this paper reveal that both Sabahan and Kelantanese women have been imagined as beautiful and feminine as well as possessing their own unique identities either in the forms of characteristics or traditional attires. Among the primary representations of women in tourism brochures of these states are images of women participating in traditional music, dances and handicraft. Strong and brave women have also been manifested in the brochures through portrayals of women as a warrior and ruler, sellers and vendors in the local markets, priestesses and ladies carrying heavy loads. Overall, these representation associated with local women have been included in promotional materials to promote ethnic and cultural tourism as the primary attractions to lure tourists to Malaysia from its infant stage of tourism development. Lately, the representation of Malaysian women has been reduced in the relatively recent brochures probably due to the adoption of new marketing strategies and a change in local's values. However, the presence of multi-ethnic women in tourism brochures is important in the context of this country as it not only can accentuate ethnic identities but can also project Malaysia as a peaceful and harmonious nation to foreign tourists.

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